

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Maritza Ortiz, and I'm a New Haven resident.

I stand in support of **HB 6616: AN ACT CONCERNING EXPANSION OF HUSKY HEALTH BENEFITS TO THOSE INELIGIBLE DUE TO IMMIGRATION STATUS**. Expanding HUSKY access to all children and adults to age 26 regardless of immigration status is an important step in ensuring our immigrant community has access to the healthcare that we all deserve. Our work does not end with expanding access to 26 years of age; We need to open access to HUSKY and healthcare to all immigrants of any age. If Connecticut wants a future that includes healthy families and a stable workforce, Connecticut must make sure these people have access to health coverage.

I'm supporting this legislation because there are many people who, out of fear that they will be charged a very large amount of money when they go to the hospital, decide not to go because the hospital bill is very expensive. There are people who do not go to clinics for fear of the cost and decide to stay home sick. These people may have a disease that continues to spread and may become advanced as time goes by.

A lot of people don't have support to receive medical care. In the past I wanted to see a doctor for an issue with my hands, but I couldn't because it was expensive. I had to wait and put up with my hand pain. I went to one place and another, and they told me that I needed insurance until one day I found out about the financial assistance program "Free Care" at Yale New Haven Hospital (YNHH). I had to wait a year to fill out paperwork for this program so that I could see a doctor. If I wasn't receiving this financial assistance through YNHH or if I didn't get my financial assistance application re-approved, I wouldn't go to the doctor because it's very expensive. Before finding out about this financial assistance program, I needed to have surgery and I preferred not to do it because of the expense. Even with this financial assistance program, there is always a risk. One has to apply for the Free Care program every year and there is always a risk that you may not get approved. If they don't approve my application this year, I will not be able to continue going to the doctor.

If I had free medical insurance, I wouldn't have to put up with illness or discomfort. I would receive help and go without fear of being rejected at the hospital. For example, if I have a headache I don't go because I don't have insurance and I put up with the headache. But with health insurance, I can go see a doctor.

I support **HB 6616** and ask the committee to support and pass this legislation. Looking forward to the future, I ask the committee to open access to all immigrants regardless of age.

Thank you for your time,

Maritza Ortiz